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THE HONGKONG DISPENSARY.

Hongkong, 19th November, 1894.

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The Daily Press.

HONGKONG, NOVEMBER 30TH, 1894.

For some time past reports have been current

that the budget for 1895 would be a surprise.

And a surprise it is, with a vengeance.

The colony finds that it has a hitherto

unimagined balance, irrespective of loans, of \$600,000. Where it came

from is an interesting problem, the solution

of which will perhaps afford the colony an in-

structive insight into the manipulation of the

public accounts. According to the "Report

on the Blue Book and Departmental Expenditure

for 1893" laid before the Legislative

Council, the assets of the colony on the

31st December, 1892, exceeded its liabilities

by \$35,106 only. From the returns of

revenue and expenditure for 1893 we find

that the surplus for that year, excluding the

amount spent on extraordinary public works,

was \$74,441. This sum, added to the

balance existing on the 31st December,

1892, gives a total surplus at the beginning

of the present year, irrespective of loans,

of \$109,547. For the present year there

is an estimated deficit of \$66,406, which

reduces the balance to \$43,140. And yet we

are told there is a balance of \$600,000! A

loan was concluded last year, which raised

the balance in hand at the end of the year

to \$1,489,023. But we are told that the

balance of \$600,000 referred to is "exclusive

of all monies derived from loans." To put

the matter quite frankly, we doubt the honest

balance of any such balance. Either the

balance is a purely fictitious one or the Re-

port on the Blue Book (No. 19 of 1894) was

grossly erroneous, for since the 31st Decem-

ber, 1892, the colony has not accumulated

\$600,000, irrespective of the loan, nor a tenth

part of that amount. But it is perhaps not

difficult to imagine how such a balance might

be made to appear. It has been decided

that certain public works may be charged

against the loan. When the first loan

was exhausted the colony went on paying

for its public works out of the balances ac-

balance so brought out as an "exclusive

of all monies derived from loans" would be

directly contrary to fact; We hope this

more satisfactory explanation of this

peculiar balance may be forthcoming than

that suggested above, which is the only one

that has occurred to our own unaided intel-

ligence. It is happily to be shown that the

suspiciously suggested by the figures as they

stand are unfounded. The Government has

no one but itself to blame for the existence

of those suspicious, for there are no detailed

accounts published by which the public can see

for itself the state of the Colony's finances

from year to year. The annual return of

revenue and expenditure gives no indica-

tion of how the balances carried forward

are disposed of, but is simply a cash ac-

count; and the Blue Book Report baldly

states the balance supposed to be in hand at

the end of the year, without showing how

the figures are arrived at. The speech made

by the Governor at the opening of the Legis-

lative session is supposed to show in a general

way the financial position, but while the

accounts themselves are kept in the back-

ground it is of course easy to put whatever

complexion one wishes upon the figures of the

time seem to render desirable. Speaking on

the 25th January, 1892, the Governor gave

an analysis of the position intended to show

that the raising of a fresh loan could no

longer be delayed, because during the year the

then existing balance would all be swallowed

up, and as a matter of fact it was, with the

exception of \$35,000, but on Thursday last,

when it was desired to vote \$50,000 to the

officials in excess of their salaries, an un-

expected balance of \$600,000 was brought

to light. If this balance were a real and

not a fictitious one what reason would there

be to impose additional taxation to make up

the estimated deficit for next year of

\$67,000? With such a large sum in hand

a small deficit of that kind might be faced

with equanimity, even if it were repeated for

three or four years. It would be time enough

to consider additional taxation when the cash

balances were exhausted, and especially should

new burdens be avoided at a time like the

present, when the Colony is labouring under

the effects of a series of misfortunes and the

stringency is felt by every one, rich and poor

alike. On the whole the Governor's

speech strikes us as the most unsatisfac-

tory that has been made for very many

years past. And what ab of the unofficial

members of Council? Early in the year

they were all opposed to the granting of

exchange, compensation, because the colony

could not afford it; now they are willing to

vote all that is asked for, although addi-

tional taxation has to be imposed to provide

the money. It would seem that the secrecy

of the recent private meetings of the Legis-

lative Council has not been conducive to the

political health of the hon. gentlemen who

are supposed to represent the public in-

terest. Not only are they aiding and

abetting the Government in imposing addi-

tional burdens on the people to live the

pockets of the officials, but according to the

Governor, they have declared themselves

opposed to the representative principle

in connection with the Sanitary Board.

His Excellency says that he is personally

favorable to municipal and representative

institutions, but he considers that in this

instance the opinion of the unofficial mem-

bers should be acted on; from which the

only inference to be drawn is that the un-

official members want to hand the sani-

tation of the Colony over to the irresponsible

control of officials, a system the lamentable

working of which is set out in the Colonial

Surgeon's special report on sanitation for

the last twenty years, given as an appendix

to his annual report and which was reprinted

in our yesterday's issue. We find it difficult

to believe that the unofficial members can so

far have betrayed the public interest.

The O. S. C. Co's steamer *Major* left Singa-

pore for Hongkong on the 27th inst. and is

expected here on or about the 30th inst.

The O. S. C. Co's steamer *Orinda*, with mails, &c.,

which left here on Oct. 31st for San Francisco,

via Nagasaki, Kobe, Inland Sea, Yokohama,

and Honolulu, arrived at her destination on the 27th

inst.

The *Strait Times* says:—It is reported that

the present Chinese Consul at Singapore is hav-

ing shortly for China to take up his official

position at Shanghai. For the last few days

numerous anonymous circulars in Chinese, have

been despatched throughout the town to the

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